

VZCZCXRO4711
OO RUEHDA
DE RUEHAK #0423/01 0641428
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 041428Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5454
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC//PA
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 8724
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3955
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 2744
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 6451
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 6284
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2864
RUEUITH/DET 1 39LG ANKARA TU
RHMFISS/USDOCO 6ATAF IZMIR TU
RHMFISS/39OS INCIRLIK AB TU
RHMFISS/AFOSI DET 523 IZMIR TU
RHMFISS/39ABG INCIRLIK AB TU
RHMFISS/AFOSI DET 522 INCIRLIK AB TU
RUEUITH/AFLO ANKARA TU

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 000423

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL
JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
TUESDAY, MARCH 4, 2008

In Today's Papers

TGS Chief General Buyukanit Addresses Criticism from the Press
All papers report that Chief of Turkish General Staff (TGS) General Yasar Buyukanit addressed the press yesterday and reacted strongly against allegations that the Turkish military withdrew because of US pressure. All papers quoted General Buyukanit, "if anyone can prove the US influenced the decision to withdraw, I will take my uniform off." He added, "We chose Zap as a target because it is the place where the PKK masterminds its attacks. Zap is the nerve center for the terrorists, while camps in Qandil are used for training and logistics. The PKK cannot be eliminated with one operation; this time, we taught them one lesson; but we will teach the terrorists more lessons in the future. The fight against terrorism cannot be carried out only by military operations. But advocates for political solution do not provide details for a solution. When someone does speak in detail, he/she speaks on behalf of the PKK and demands constitutional reforms, recognition of the Kurdish identity, education in mother tongue and general amnesty. I have not seen any other political proposal."

Meanwhile, mainstream Sabah reports that Land Forces Commander General Ilker Basbug said, "The Turkish state should take necessary measures in order to prevent poor, uneducated, and unemployed youngsters from joining the PKK. Economic measures should somehow be presented to these youngsters."

EDITORIAL COMMENTARY

"Stop Counting Dead Bodies"

Cengiz Candar is a prominent foreign affairs analyst and columnist for business daily Referans. He wrote in Referans (3/4):
"Turkey has to look ahead and put aside debates about future land operations. Any rhetoric related to cross border operations will only fuel the fires of violence and help the PKK attract new recruits. Now is the time to take preventive action to eliminate the need for any further land operations. First of all, a

cooperation mechanism with Iraqi Kurds should be initiated. Turkey will find it very easy to proceed with this mechanism when Baghdad and the US are fully engaged in the control of the border. Next, there is an urgent need for a four-party mechanism between Ankara, Baghdad, Erbil and Washington. The security cooperation should be attached to political and economic contacts with Iraqi Kurds. Turkey should also initiate legal steps for its own Kurds. Revitalizing Turkey's EU process can be a good route to initiate this process. The upcoming visit of Iraqi President Talabani to Turkey is a good opportunity to open a brand new page in relations. Let's look ahead and discard the rhetoric of violence."

"Killing is not the Way to Finish the PKK"

Sahin Alpay is a senior columnist and researcher. He wrote in Islamist-oriented Zaman (3/4):

"Because the land operations were so short, they ended on a happy note. Had the operation lasted longer, our troops could have faced confrontation with the Kurdish Regional Administration, Iraq and the US. The operation ended right after calls for withdrawal from US officials, but that does not justify the argument that Turkey withdrew due to US pressures. Given the fact that Iraq is still under American occupation, this operation proved Turkish military activity can be carried out with American cooperation and coordination. The core question should be about the success of this operation. We should talk about the methods of fighting, namely the PKK's guerilla tactics vs. the Turkish military's conventional approach. Also, we should discuss the need for a professional army.

In any case, this operation proved Turkey's power and determination in the fight against the PKK. Nevertheless, in order to render the PKK ineffective, Ankara needs to engage in close cooperation with Kurdish Regional Administration, Washington and Baghdad. Now the

ANKARA 00000423 002 OF 003

question is whether the AKP government will be able to make this happen. You cannot finish the PKK by killing them off, one-by-one. However, the recognition of legitimate freedoms and rights for Turkey's Kurds can render the PKK ineffective. Once that point is reached, the main questions for the ruling AKP are: Are we going to see the implementation of democratic reforms? Are we going to see special development measures for the southeast region? Are we going to see an amnesty plan to win back the youth who are currently under the influence of the PKK?"

CHP Leader Deniz Baykal Comments on the Withdrawal

Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet and others:

During yesterday's live interview on NTV, main opposition party CHP leader Deniz Baykal said he does not accept claims that Turkey withdrew from northern Iraq on its own. Baykal claimed that the decision for withdrawal was made during the meetings between US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, PM Erdogan and President Gul. "I

SIPDIS

think some are trying to hold a sword over Turkey so we cannot eliminate terror permanently. My party will carry the issue to the parliament."

Turkish Academics' View on A Solution for Kurdish Issue

Liberal Radikal is writing a series of reports on academics' approaches to solutions for the Kurdish Issue. Professor Baskin Oran said "a solution must include economic measures and freedom. Freedom is needed not only for Kurdish people but for all people of Turkey". Tugrul Turkes of MHP said, "We all have equal constitutional citizenship. Economic reforms are needed in the southeast." MHP Istanbul Deputy Gunduz Aktan said "The PKK should lay down their arms. Cultural rights cannot be discussed while the terrorist threat continues."

PKK Alarm at the Border

Mainstream Milliyet reports that Turkish military units along the border with Iraq were put on alert against possible attacks by the PKK. Turkish troops launched a "dawn operation" to neutralize 20 PKK terrorists who infiltrated the border into Sirnak's Bestler Dereler region. Operations continue in Cudi, Kato, Kupeli and Cirav

regions.

Supreme Court: "Compulsory Religious Education is Unconstitutional."

Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Milliyet and others: The Supreme Court of Appeals ruled that the religion classes within the current curriculum cannot be compulsory. The Supreme Court's 8th Chamber recognized the claims of two Alevi parents who filed an appeal which asked that their children to be exempt from religion classes. The Supreme Court ruled that when a curriculum is based on the perspective of a single religion, in this case Islam, it is not a 'religion and ethics culture' class but a religion class. Students cannot be forced to take such classes. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet says that the ruling was "historical."

Controversial Independence Celebrations in Askale Sabah, Milliyet, Vatan, Radikal, Hurriyet, Cumhuriyet, Posta, and others: Yesterday marked the 90th anniversary of the liberation of Askale, a town in the Erzurum region. Part of the program included the reenactment of an imam being hung by an Armenian gang. Children of the town were shocked by the grotesque nature of the scene. All papers carried the story from the angle that such reenactments should no longer take place. Mainstream Sabah columnist Ergun Babahan criticizes the scene harshly and says "as long as we raise our kids with such scenes, we won't have a hard time finding triggermen in murders based on ethnic, religious and intellectual differences." Sabah's front page headline reads, "Hate Ceremony," and carries a photo of children who are frightened by the mock execution. Mainstream Hurriyet quotes a psychiatrist who notes, "These kinds of hate ceremonies led to the murder of Hrant Dink."

ANKARA 00000423 003 OF 003

TV News:
CNN Turk

Domestic News

- Government spokesman Cemil Cicek said the government does not have a special for combating terror, and urged PKK militants to apply for existing repentance law.

- Five students from Gazi University in Ankara have filed a legal complaint against Rector Kadri Yamac, who refused to admit them to the University because they were wearing turbans.

- YOK President Prof.Ozcan visited Kirikkale University. He did not answer questions for journalists, but said he will try to relax the atmosphere

International News

- Iranian President Ahmedinejad proposed a trilateral cooperation between Turkey, Iran, and Iraq in order to combat the PKK and PJAK

- The Turkish youth who was beaten by police in Germany has died.

WILSON